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ABSTRACT

This lesson uses students' areas of interest both in and out of school to generate personalized vocabulary lists. Working in small groups, grade 3 to 5 students select their own vocabulary words and research their meanings. In a culminating activity that uses text and illustration, each student will create a "My World of Words Journal." During three 45-minute sessions, students will: use print and nonprint sources from their environment to generate vocabulary lists based on their own interests; create individual journals that will include a comprehensive definition of each word; and work collaboratively to research and compile information pertaining to vocabulary lists. The instructional plan, lists of resources, student assessment/reflection activities, and a list of National Council of Teachers of English/International Reading Association (NCTE/IRA) Standards addressed in the lesson are included. A "Words I Want to Learn More About" worksheet and a World of Words Journal are attached. (PM)

My World of Words: Building Vocabulary Lists

Author

Grade Band

3-5

Estimated Lesson Time

Three 45-minute sessions, with additional time for class discussion of word choices

Overview

This lesson affords students the opportunity to select personalized vocabulary words based on their interests and facets of their daily lives. Through cooperative group discussion, students will generate their own vocabulary word lists and research the words' meanings. Each student will create a "My World of Words Journal" that will include definitions and proper usage information. Students will then participate in an interactive journal share to elicit feedback from their classmates.

From Theory to Practice

Ruddell, M.R., & Shearer, B.A. (2002). "Extraordinary," "tremendous," "exhilarating," "magnificent": Middle school at-risk students become avid word learners with the Vocabulary Self-Collection Strategy (VSS). *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 45(5), 352-363.

- Students maintain a personalized involvement with language by selecting their own vocabulary words. This personal interest motivates vocabulary connections in other subject areas.
- Data from this study shows student journal entries became more sophisticated. Their word knowledge and spelling for VSS words were notably increased.

Student Objectives

Students will

- Use print and nonprint sources from their environment to generate vocabulary lists based on their own interests
- Create individual journals that will include a comprehensive definition of each word
- Work collaboratively to research and compile information pertaining to vocabulary list

Resources

- Words I Want to Learn More About handout
- My World of Words Journal handout
- A selection of print resources (e.g., books, magazines, and pictures with captions that students may find interesting)
- Chart paper or blackboard
- Computers with Internet access (preferred but optional)
- Dictionary, thesaurus, encyclopedias

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- Websites:
 - [Merriam-Webster Online](#)
 - [OneLook Dictionary](#)
 - [Online Thesaurus](#)
 - [Online Dictionary](#)
 - [National Geographic Explorer](#)
 - [ReadWriteThink's Web Resources Gallery](#)
 - [Little Explorers Picture Dictionary](#)

Instructional Plan

Preparation

1. Print copies of Words I Want to Learn More About and My World of Words Journal handouts for each student.
2. Preview National Geographic Explorer or one of the Web resources at ReadWriteThink to identify pertinent content for students.
3. Gather print resources.
4. Schedule computer lab time, if necessary.

Instruction and Activities

Session 1: Thinking About How Words Relate to Interests

1. Begin by showing students that there is a "world of words" around them—online or in magazines, newspapers, books, letters, and conversations, to name only a few places. Stress that the Internet is a rich source for words and not just for recreation. Note that you can learn a lot about words by following what you find interesting.
2. Ask students to go online to a website they might find interesting, such as National Geographic Explorer, or one of the Web resources at ReadWriteThink that includes content for students. Guide them to the articles you preselected. You may also allow students to choose a book or magazine that they like, perhaps from your collection of resources. The important thing is for students to select something they find interesting to read.
3. In small groups, guide students to talk about what they find interesting about the website or print resource they selected. Ask students to identify at least one word in the text that they find interesting and want to know more about.
4. Ask one student to discuss one or two of his or her interests. Then ask the rest of the class for vocabulary words that pertain to the student's answers, and write the words on the board or chart paper. For example, if a student says, "I like to run," ask students to suggest vocabulary words that fit under that subject area (e.g., perspiration, thirst, dehydration, fitness). Explain that it's okay if they don't know exactly what the words mean.
5. Tell students that each day for the next five days they will have to find a word that is unknown to them but interests them. Distribute the Words I Want to Learn More About chart to each student. Explain to students that each day, including that day, they should write the word they choose on the chart and then fill in where they read or heard the word, why they selected it for the chart, and what they think it means. Suggest that they may use a word that they found in class from the online or print materials. Explain that they don't have to know the word's definition or spelling, but they must have a reason for selecting it. For example, a student can bring in a word they heard their karate

instructor use. The student's reason may be that he or she wants to teach karate to a friend.

6. You should also complete your own Words I Want to Learn More About chart. Students will become even more motivated when they see the teacher actively participating and not simply observing.
7. For each of the next four days, remind students to add a word and fill in the appropriate row on the chart.

Session 2: Words We Want to Learn More About

1. After each student has recorded five days' worth of words on his or her chart, have students meet in small groups.
2. Encourage group members to discuss their word choices and the words' meanings or what they think the words mean. Circulate among the groups, sharing one of your word choices and modeling the recording process on your Words I Want to Learn More About chart.
3. Explain that the next class session will involve researching their group's words to find definitions, pronunciations, and proper grammatical uses. Encourage students to bring in the books, magazines, or other materials in which they found the words.

Session 3: Researching Words

1. Have students meet with their groups and review their individual word lists. Give each student the My World of Words Journal handout.
2. Using reference materials, such as a dictionary, thesaurus, and encyclopedia (and possibly a classroom computer), have them assist one another in researching each word on the list. A whole class trip to the computer lab would be an ideal way to reinforce that words are available electronically. Provide the students with these websites:

Merriam-Webster Online. An online dictionary that includes word of the day and word games.

OneLook Dictionary. This website searches through multiple dictionary websites. It offers each word in numerous sentences.

Online Thesaurus and Online Dictionary. Both websites offer word definitions via dictionary or thesaurus. They also provide idioms and sentences.

Little Explorers Picture Dictionary. Illustrated dictionary entries with meaningful example sentence (multilingual available)

Have students check each word for proper spelling and record the information pertaining to its correct definition, pronunciation, and proper grammatical usage. Circulate from group to group and demonstrate how to record the information. Any incomplete research can be finished at home. If applicable, encourage students to use a separate sheet of paper to provide a small picture for each word. It can be an illustration, a photo, or a newspaper or magazine clipping.

Session 4: Share the My World of Words Journals

1. Have students meet in their groups to share their journals. Encourage students to discuss one another's words, give positive feedback, and ask for clarification as needed. Circulate through the class and preview the journals. Demonstrate the appropriate positive feedback and relevant questions.
2. Collect the journals so that you can make copies of them for future class use. Then return them to

the students and encourage them to share the journals with their families and friends.

3. Find class time over the next few days to discuss at least one word from each student. Consider discussing several words each day or even spending one whole class period discussing the words.

Extensions

- Students may create future word lists to be added to their My World of Words Journal by generating categories of interest that could be specific to other curriculum areas (e.g., visual art, music, gym, computers) or be specific to school and community events.
- Students may investigate word usage from other countries (e.g., Australia: mates=friends; UK: lorry=truck, flat=apartment). Each student may create a list of identified words and research the words' etymology. They can then write one sentence for each foreign word, making sure to use it in proper context. Students should listen to their classmates' sentences and try to figure out the correct meaning of the word.

Student Assessment/Reflections

- Completion of a My World of Words Journal that includes comprehensive definitions, proper grammatical usage, and imaginative picture clues on a separate sheet of paper
- Collaborative efforts demonstrated by students in conducting thorough research on words
- Interactive, enthused journal share in which students verbalize pertinent feedback and relevant questions
- Rubric

IRA/NCTE Standards

4 - Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

7 - Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

8 - Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

11 - Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

12 - Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).



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Name _____

Words I Want to Learn More About

	Word	What I think this word means	Where I read or heard this word	Why I'm interested in this word
Day 1				
Day 2				
Day 3				
Day 4				
Day 5				

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My World of Words Journal

Name: _____

Word 1: _____

Pronunciation: _____

Definition: _____

Use the word in a sentence: _____

Word 2: _____

Pronunciation: _____

Definition: _____

Use the word in a sentence: _____

Word 3: _____

Pronunciation: _____

Definition: _____

Use the word in a sentence: _____

Word 4: _____

Pronunciation: _____

Definition: _____

Use the word in a sentence: _____

Word 5: _____

Pronunciation: _____

Definition: _____

Use the word in a sentence: _____



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